



S.V.A.C.

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 3 SEP 2013

Location: NG Aviation Facility, Concord

In Attendance:

Members:

Peter Burdett, Chairman, MOAA
 Bobby Bronske, Vice Chairman, CVMA
 Steph Riley, Secretary, NGANH
 Rep. Robert Theberge
 Benjamin Saxon, DAV
 Ron Reilly, DAV
 Jim Golden, VFW
 Patti Fowler, MOPH
 Al Grant, VVA
 Raymond Goulet, VVA
 Mike Horne, ROA
 Ken Lull, MOAA
 Kevin Grady, AFA
 Ed Josephson, AFA
 Joe Shea, MCL
 Ray Hayes, AFSA
 Mike Rice, NH Army Retiree Council
 Susan Cuddy, Women Vets of America, Chp 41
 Mike Farinola, CVMA
 Robert Garand, CWV

Advisors:

Jo Moncher, DHHS
 Barry Conway, SAGE Emeritus
 Joseph DiChiaro, Chaplain

(non-voting)

Guests:

Sarah Holmes for Senator Shaheen
 Steve Monier for Senator Ayotte
 Joshua Denton for Rep Shea-Porter
 Michael Ollen for Rep McLane-Kuster
 Lisa Aldridge, NHTAA
 CSM Steve Houten, State CSM NHARNG
 Judy Crockett, Manchester VAMC
 Dan Marcek, VetFlix
 Pete Duffy, NGAUS
 Cate Sementa, Harbor Homes SSVF
 MAJ Justin Strevig, Director of SMFS, NHNG
 Doug Hewitt, American Red Cross
 Roger Hooper, American Red Cross
 Roger Knight, Red Sox Foundation Home Base Program
 John Broderick, Jr., Dean of UNH School of Law
 Erin Corcoran, ED of Warren B Rudman Center
 Karin Borgstrom, UNH School of Law
 Bill Zeliff, Fmr US Congressman Dist. 1, NH
 John Reed, Tricare/USFHP Healthcare Rep
 Heather Aicholtz, 211 NH
 Taylor Caswell, Soldier On
 MG Harry Miller, Easter Seals NH
 Patrick Goyetch, Philips Healthcare Govt Division
 Chris Bright, Philips Healthcare Govt Division

1. Open Meeting/ Call to order: Chairman, Pete Burdett convened the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance: P Burdett

Invocation:

b. Welcome/Remarks: Thanked everyone for taking time to be here. Gave an update on Chair Emeritus, Griff Dalianis, who sends his greetings. Pete has been named the new CASA (Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army) for NH, taking over the position from Griff. Let Pete know of any issues that the Secretary of the Army should know about and he will pass them on. Sage Emeritus Barry Conway said that he will be going to the UK in Nov but should make the October meeting.

c. Introduction of New Members/Guests/Visitors:

Approved

Doug Hewitt, American Red Cross
Roger Knight, Red Sox Foundation Home Base Program
John Broderick, Dean of UNH School of Law
Karin Borgstrom, UNH School of Law
Bill Zelif, Fmr US Congressman Dist. 1, NH
John Reed, Tricare/USFHP Healthcare Rep
Heather Aicholtz, 211 NH
Taylor Caswell, Soldier On
Patrick Goyetch, Philips Healthcare Govt Division
Chris Bright, Philips Healthcare Govt Division

d. Secretary's Report: S Riley reported the presence of a quorum, making it an official meeting. The minutes from the JUN 2013 meeting were to be approved after the CODEL staffer updates were added with a motion by M Horne and a 2nd by B Saxon, unanimous vote to accept minutes.

e. Rudman Center-UNH School of Law speakers: John Broderick, Jr., Erin Corcoran, Karin Borgstrom, Bill Zelif - The Warren B. Rudman Center for Justice, Leadership and Public Policy provides scholarship, training, and opportunity for a new generation of leaders who cherish public service. The Rudman Center and its programs also serve as a living monument to Senator Rudman and the other leaders of his political generation whose values and examples it seeks to foster, transmit and preserve. In creating the Rudman Center, UNH Law has embarked on a bold course to shape a new generation of leaders. They will be selected for their experience and potential to carry forth the key values of Warren Rudman's career in public service: a commitment to justice, a capacity for leadership, and a devotion to common sense, common purpose, and the common good. The hallmark of the Rudman Center is the **Rudman Fellows** program, which selects two entering law students each year and develops their interest and skills in public policy. The Rudman Fellows are granted tuition exemptions, summer scholarships, and one-year post-graduate fellowships that place them in organizations that exemplify the mission of the Rudman Center, such as the Concord Coalition and the New Hampshire Attorney General's office. In exchange for these opportunities, Rudman Fellows work for at least three years in government or public interest positions. **Robert J. Dole Veteran Fellows:** This \$1 million endowed fellowship is being established to honor the legacy of Senators Dole and Rudman by providing veterans with the opportunity to attend law school and use their legal education to provide legal assistance to veterans.

f. Red Sox Foundation Home Base Program, Roger Knight- works with Post 9/11 veterans and families that suffer from PTSD and/or TBI. The foundation serves all of Red Sox nation; veterans come from all of the New England states. Home Base works with Vets Count, Easter Seals, Harvard Law, the Rudman Center, etc. Want to work with all of these organizations to provide wrap around care for the veteran. Will try to get dishonorable discharges adjudicated, etc.

g. Soldier On, Taylor Caswell- Soldier On is a unique organization that works with homeless veterans and sees housing as a vital piece in their care. The project exists in Pittsfield, MA; Agawam, MA; Albany, NY; northern NJ. The project is formed in a co-operative type of format. The object is to have a struggling vet find a permanent place to live. Ashland, NH is the location where they are planning to build 50 units of co-op type housing. Hopeful to get it funded in the first year, have applied for funding and grants. All services for vets would be provided on site. If they cannot be, will have vans available for transportation to the services. The success of the model is that it is peer managed. They have resident boards that are resident run. They get to make the decisions on how it is run. They are backed by the Soldier On organization. The vacancy rate for these facilities is 0%. They work with local businesses and universities to get job and career opportunities. The success of the group is substantial and Soldier On is excited to have a facility in northern NH. The majority of the population served is Vietnam Vets. Hope to break ground next Spring if the funding comes through.

2. Old Business:

a. Legislative Committee- Ed Josephson: had a request from the Senate to look into SB 36 regarding the property tax exemption for permanently disabled veterans. We didn't support it last year; it put too much burden on communities. The law called for complete exemption for those permanently disabled from military service. In 2010 there were 2099 people permanently disabled in NH that qualified for tax exemption and 52 of those would have qualified for the special exemption. Will be gathering information from Mary Morin and from the Dept of Revenue. This is the first major request from the legislature for help in developing legislation before it gets submitted. Want to understand all of the implications, what could be optional for the town, might want to consider putting a cap on it. Would like to have some volunteers to assist with legislative issues during this session. If interested email Ed at Josephson@comcast.net

Approved

[Theberge]-regarding retained bills from last session. Have been discussing the veteran ID card, have had a meeting on it to see what we can and cannot recommend. It is a resolution because it has federal implications so we have to request the CODEL to get involved.

The subcommittee for the Honor and Remember Flag will be submitting a resolution to the Senate to allow anyone who has the flag to fly it at their own house.

Will be working with BrigGen Protzmann on a military compact for children's education. Am doing research on that to be able to move forward.

Right now the placeholder legislation is coming forward during the filing period. Won't be able to do anything with it until the actual LSR's are submitted.

b. NH 211, Heather Aicholtz- still operating 24/7 throughout the year. Still operating the statewide homeless shelter hotline as well as recently partnering with NH Housing, NH Dept of Justice and NH Dept of Banking. Are taking in more calls than expected from people that are at risk of foreclosures. Last year, from Aug to Aug, NH 211 had 51,000 calls which is about 3500 per month. Noticing gaps in services, so are sending those needs reports to the United Way partners to try and get more state agencies signed up. The top 6 needs are: homeless services (about 10,000 calls last year); at risk for homelessness; tax season assistance; electric bill assistance; rent assistance; legal assistance and heating fuel assistance. Not hearing from as many veterans, active duty or families as you would think. Only 124 veteran, 6 active duty and 3 family member calls from that population out of the 51,000. Not sure if they know about the service or if they just don't want to call.

[Burdett]-SVAC needs to do more marketing of the service. They ask "have you served" and then have a protocol to refer properly. Military providers need to let NH 211 know about your services so they can update their info line.

3. New Business:

a. Reports:

Still trying to get Nancy Cook from the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program for veterans to come and present

b. Issues from the floor:

[Theberge]- there is a Veteran group from the Netherlands that are coming on OCT 23 that want to meet with local veterans. My committee is hosting them, will give an update at the next meeting.

[Theberge]- There is an issue at the Veterans Home regarding refusing to admit vets who smoke. There is an open discussion about the issue at their next BOD meeting to be held on 21 OCT at 0900.

d. National Legislative Staff Remarks: need to reach out to staffers for their updates

Sarah Holmes (Senator Shaheen):

CHAIRWOMAN SHAHEEN AND RANKING MEMBER AYOTTE SUPPORT MILITARY READINESS, REJECT BASE CLOSURES > U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, today rejected the Administration's request for another round of military base closures and made important investments in military readiness to mitigate the impacts of sequestration at the subcommittee's markup of this year's Defense Authorization legislation. The Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee is primarily responsible for military readiness including training, logistics, military construction, and maintenance.

SHAHEEN PROVISION TO ADDRESS MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS INCLUDED IN NATIONAL DEFENSE BILL > The Senate Armed Services Committee today approved language offered by U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) to change the way the Department of Defense designates sexual assault prevention officers, adding a new level of accountability and scrutiny to the position after multiple Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) officers were reportedly accused of sexual assault in recent weeks. The bipartisan measure, which is modeled after standalone legislation that was introduced by Shaheen and Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE) last month, will be included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2014.

SHAHEEN MEASURES INCLUDED IN CRITICAL NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL > U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) voted for the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which passed the Armed Services Committee by a vote of 23-3. The annual bill authorizes all Department of Defense programs and major defense policy issues and includes a number of key provisions that were sponsored by Shaheen, Chair of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support.

Specific provisions in the final version of the bill that were introduced or supported by Shaheen include:

*KC-46A Aerial Refueling Tanker: The bill provides full funding of \$1.6 billion for continued development of the Air Force's next generation refueling tanker.

Approved

*Virginia Class Submarines: The committee fully funded the Virginia-class submarine program, ensuring the construction of two new subs in FY14.

*Sexual Assault Reform: The Armed Services Committee included a number of bipartisan amendments in the bill, including three provisions authored by Shaheen. Collectively they address nearly every facet of current sexual assault prevention and response policies and within the Department of Defense.

The first Shaheen provision included in committee's final bill speaks to the urgency of military sexual assault by expediting the timeline of the report of the independent sexual assault review panel to no later than 12 months after the first meeting. Currently, the panel has 18 months to finalize its report, which is unsatisfactory given the need for immediate reform. The "Response Systems to Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel," as it is known, was established by last year's Defense Authorization to provide independent perspective on the shortcomings of our current systems and ensure accountability for their improvement.

The second Shaheen measure, designed to effect cultural change in the military, elevates the role of Sexual Assault Prevention Response (SAPR) officers to ensure the highest caliber candidates are assigned to those positions. Changes to the selection process will include a more rigorous screening and interview process than what is customary for those positions today.

"These commonsense changes will get much-needed answers to Congress in a timely manner consistent with the gravity of this issue and increases the value of SAPR positions to the level that they deserve," said Shaheen.

*Counter Threat Reduction: The bill included several provisions taken from Shaheen's Next Generation Cooperative Threat Reduction Act of 2013 that will modernize the way the United States meets challenges posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD's).

*Classification Reform: The committee bill also included a plan introduced by Shaheen to reform the nation's classification systems by directing Department of Defense to cooperate in any future interagency classification reform efforts. The provision required the Pentagon to evaluate and report to Congress on the recommendations of the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB) for reforming its outdated classification systems.

*Increased Funding for DOD Inspectors General: As Chair of the Readiness subcommittee, Shaheen increased funding for the Department of Defense's Inspectors General (IG's) by \$35 million. In 2012 DOD IG's saved over \$3.6 billion in tax payer funds and IG efforts have been credited with a nearly eleven dollar return on investment for every dollar appropriated.

Military Readiness: The Full Committee bill also included a number of important provisions that Shaheen introduced as the Chair of the Readiness Subcommittee, including important investments in military readiness, provisions to help mitigate the impacts of sequestration, and reforms to the Department of Defense to save money and improve acquisition management. The Committee also approved a Shaheen-supported \$11.5 million military construction project at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to consolidate its structural shops.

NEW HAMPSHIRE DELEGATION WELCOMES GENERAL DEMPSEY TO NEW HAMPSHIRE > U.S. Senators Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), along with Congresswomen Annie Kuster (D-NH) and Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH), welcomed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, to New Hampshire today to meet with military officials at Pease Air National Guard Base and representatives from local defense companies.

SHAHEEN, KUSTER ANNOUNCE \$1 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT TO HARBOR HOMES TO HELP END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS > Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Congresswoman Annie Kuster (NH-02) announced that Harbor Homes will receive a \$1 million grant to help keep hundreds of local veterans in their homes and off the streets. The funding, administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), is part of the agency's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program (SSVF), which helps local non-profit organizations to prevent at-risk veterans from becoming homeless and to secure housing for those who have recently lost their homes.

SHAHEEN, KUSTER ANNOUNCE \$263,000 FEDERAL GRANT TO SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY SERVICES TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS > Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Congresswoman Annie Kuster (NH-02) announced that Southwestern Community Services will receive a \$263,000 grant to help keep local veterans in their homes and off the streets. The funding, administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), is part of the agency's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program (SSVF), which helps local non-profit organizations to prevent at-risk veterans from becoming homeless and to secure housing for those who have recently lost their homes.

SHAHEEN MEETS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS, MILITARY PERSONNEL AT UNH ROUNDTABLE ON MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT > Continuing her efforts in the fight against sexual assault in the military, U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) today joined law enforcement officials and military personnel for a roundtable discussion at the University of New Hampshire to discuss efforts to improve sexual assault prevention. Shaheen was joined by representatives from the New Hampshire National Guard and the Dover Police Department and outlined provisions she included in the FY2014 National Defense Authorization Act to address sexual abuse prevention. Those provisions include a measure that will leverage the expertise of civilian best practices at law centers like UNH's National Criminal Justice Training Center

Steve Monier (Senator Ayotte):

June 4

On June 4, Air Force Chief of Staff General Mark Welsh testified at a SASC hearing that responses from victims regarding the Air Force's Special Victims' Counsel pilot program have been "overwhelmingly positive." On May 7, Senators Ayotte and Murray introduced the Combating Military Sexual Assault Act (S.871), key provisions of which were incorporated in the SASC FY 2014 NDAA. Furthermore, on August 15, the Department of Defense (DoD) implemented Sen. Ayotte's proposal by announcing it would immediately create a special victims' advocacy program to assist military sexual assault victims through the legal process.

June 11

In a written response to a question submitted by Sen. Ayotte in a previous SASC hearing, Chairman Dempsey testified that the Air Force's SVC pilot program is successful: "The Air Force Special Victims' Counsel (SVC) pilot program, while very new, has shown positive results and provides a robust support program for victims of sexual assault. Hundreds of victims have availed themselves of SVC services in the Air Force in just the past several months since it was implemented. Many of those victims who initially filed restricted reports of sexual assault decided to change their report to unrestricted, allowing full investigation of the offenses committed by their assailant...I support providing victims of sexual assault this important resource."

Also on June 11, Senators Shaheen and Ayotte, Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, rejected the Administration's request for another round of military base closures and made important investments in military readiness to mitigate the impacts of sequestration at the subcommittee's markup of this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Senator Ayotte said: "Despite the serious challenges that sequestration presents to our nation's military readiness, I believe we have crafted a good bipartisan bill that prioritizes the critical readiness needs of our service members. I am pleased that this legislation supports the administration's request for an important military construction project at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard that will save money and enable the skilled workers there to continue to provide world class maintenance for our nation's attack submarine fleet."

The Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee portion of the Senate Armed Services Committee-passed NDAA cuts \$1.7 billion in unneeded military construction and reinvests those funds in each of the Service's Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts to offset reductions imposed under sequestration. The Readiness Subcommittee mark authorizes an important military construction project at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to consolidate structural workshops.

June 13

The Senate Armed Services Committee approved its version of the Fiscal Year 2014 NDAA, which includes several proposals authored or cosponsored by Senator Ayotte.

First, the defense bill incorporates key provisions of bipartisan legislation authored by Senators Ayotte and Murray - the Combating Military Sexual Assault Act.

Second, the defense bill includes key provisions of the Ayotte-Blumenthal "Never Contract with the Enemy" legislation that would extend current Ayotte legislation by giving federal contracting officials in all geographic combatant commands the tools they need to more easily terminate or void contracts that are directly or indirectly benefitting America's enemies. The NDAA also extends existing DoD no contracting provisions through 2016.

Third, Sen. Ayotte successfully led the effort to include a provision in the NDAA that prohibits any spending on the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) for fiscal year 2014.

Fourth, Senators Ayotte and Shaheen worked together to oppose the Administration's request for another Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round. The Senators also worked together to authorize a project to consolidate structural workshops at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and they helped ensure that the Navy could build a second Virginia Class submarine in FY 2014.

Fifth, Sen. Ayotte's "Sense of the Senate" provision in the bill affirms the Senate's position that state courts should not consider a military deployment as the sole factor in determining child custody in a state proceeding.

Sixth, Sen. Ayotte successfully included a provision in the defense bill requiring the GAO to conduct a complete review of the costs incurred to various Army Military Housing Privatization Initiative accounts to ensure the money is

Approved

used to directly benefit military members and their families living in privatized military housing, rather than allowing the money to be diverted to pay for litigation and administrative fees. Seventh, a Sen. Ayotte provision directs the Department of Defense (DoD), in consultation with the VA; to develop a plan to ensure the most advanced lower extremity prosthetics and orthotics are made available to injured service members and veterans in a timely manner.

June 19

Sen. Ayotte released a statement following President Obama's announcement that he intends to seek additional reductions to the U.S. nuclear arsenal:

"I believe President Obama's decision to pursue additional reductions in our nuclear arsenal is misguided and dangerous...What Obama sees as compromise, Putin sees as weakness...Before seeking additional reductions to our nuclear arsenal, the administration should certify that the Russians are fully complying with all existing arms agreements, and the administration should honor the nuclear modernization commitments it made during the last round of nuclear reductions."

Additionally, Sen. Ayotte was one of 23 Senators to sign a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry on the proposed reduction of our nuclear arsenal. A section of the letter states:

"It is our view that any further reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal should only be conducted through a treaty subject to the advice and consent of the Senate."

June 25

Senator Ayotte, along with Senators John McCain and Tom Coburn, sent a letter to the Acting Secretary of the Air Force, Eric Fanning, urging the Air Force to redouble its efforts to achieve Congressionally mandated audit ability and to provide answers regarding the Department's continued inability to meet audit deadlines and milestones:

"The FY2013 [NDAA] requires the Department of Defense's Statement of Budgetary Resources (SBR) to be audit-ready by September 30, 2014. Concurrently, the FY2010 NDAA requires the Air Force's consolidated financial statements to be audit-ready by September 30, 2017. We were therefore disappointed to hear then-Secretary Donley testify on May 7, 2013 at the Senate Armed Services Committee Air Force Posture hearing that there was a 'risk' the Air Force would not meet these deadlines...We must redouble our efforts towards achieving audit ability while avoiding the colossal waste of taxpayer money such as the Expeditionary Combat Support System (ECSS), which was recently cancelled after the Air Force wasted about \$1 billion."

July 2

Sen. Ayotte joined eight other Senators in a letter to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, urging him to suspend contracts to purchase Rosoboronexport Mi-17 helicopters. The letter states in part:

"[The Purchase] saddles the Afghan military with a fleet of helicopters they can neither operate nor afford to maintain and provides U.S. tax dollars to Russian state-controlled arms export firm that is complicit in Assad's murder of innocent Syrians. The inadvisable purchase of these Mi-17 helicopters is facilitated through an entity under the control of the Russian government...It is unconscionable to provide Russia with the recently announced \$550 million contract for 30 additional Mi-17 helicopters while Prime Minister Putin acknowledges sheltering the fugitive Edward Snowden...We call your attention to the fact that you currently have the authority to end this contract with Rosoboronexport."

Also on July 2, Senators Ayotte and Shaheen wrote a letter to the Executive Director of the Wounded Warrior Project to request they approve an application for funding from Easter Seals New Hampshire. The letter reads in part:

"We believe that you will find that Easter Seals New Hampshire's Veterans Count program is worthy of your support. Veterans Count provides exceptional services to veterans and their families in recognition of their service and sacrifice for their community, and has made significant strides in areas such as suicide prevention, access to mental health care, and housing."

July 8

At Senator Ayotte's invitation, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Martin Dempsey, came to New Hampshire to meet with officials at Pease Air National Guard Base, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and representatives from local defense companies. Senator Shaheen, and Congresswomen Kuster and Shea-Porter joined Senator Ayotte in hosting General Dempsey.

"Today's visit was an important opportunity for our nation's top military officer to witness firsthand the irreplaceable contributions that Portsmouth Naval Shipyard makes to our national security by providing exceptional maintenance of the Navy's attack submarine fleet," said the New Hampshire delegation in a statement following the visit.

Also on July 8, Senators Ayotte and Mark Begich signed a letter to President Obama, expressing concern with Russia's decision to sell advanced anti-aircraft S-300 weapons system to the Assad regime. The letter contends that, on this basis, the Pentagon's contract for Rosoboronexport Mi-17 helicopters should be canceled.

Approved

July 10

At a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) hearing on the April 15 Boston bombings, Senator Ayotte said she would work to help ensure that federal agencies share vital information about potential terrorist suspects with state and local law enforcement. She also praised the excellent work of the Boston Police Department, as well as the New Hampshire law enforcement and emergency response teams that deployed to the scene of the attack - including New Hampshire State Police, the Manchester SWAT Team, the Nashua Special Reaction Team, and the Seacoast Emergency Response Team out of Portsmouth.

July 16

During a HSGAC Financial and Contracting Oversight Subcommittee hearing, Senator Ayotte questioned contracting officials from the Defense Department, State Department, and USAID about the Never Contract with the Enemy (S.675) legislation she introduced with Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), which would expand the section 841 provisions she worked to include in the FY 2012 NDAA to give federal contracting officials in all geographic combatant commands the tools they need to more easily terminate or void contracts that are directly or indirectly benefitting America's enemies.

In response to questioning from Ayotte, Dick Ginman, Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, praised the Section 841 authorities Senator Ayotte worked to include in the FY 2012 NDAA, testifying that it has helped save \$31 million in U.S. taxpayer money from going to enemies of the United States. On S. 675, he said, "I'm in agreement with...what it says and where it goes." Undersecretary of State for Management, Patrick Kennedy, also voiced support for the Ayotte-Blumenthal legislation.

July 17

Senator Ayotte wrote to Committee Chairman Carl Levin and Ranking Member James Inhofe requesting a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing to examine the findings of a report that identifies disturbing problems with the Pentagon's POW/MIA recovery efforts.

"I am writing regarding a GAO report released today that details serious problems within the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) that are hindering efforts to locate and bring home missing persons from past armed conflicts... It's clear from the report that these factors are causing DoD to fall woefully short of its mandated goal of accounting for 200 missing persons per year by 2015. More than 83,000 persons remain missing or unaccounted for from past conflicts - including 49 missing service members from Vietnam and Korea from the State of New Hampshire alone.

July 18

During a SASC hearing, Senator Ayotte asked the CJCS, General Martin Dempsey, about what action the Pentagon is taking to address troubling problems identified within the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command (JPAC). General Dempsey said the Secretary of Defense "wants to get to the bottom of it." He continued, "[I]t's so discouraging and it's moving rapidly toward disgraceful. So I assure you we will get at it."

July 25

Senator Ayotte teamed up with Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR) to introduce The Helping Our Heroes Fly Act, a bipartisan bill that would improve the airport screening process for wounded and severely disabled service members and veterans, which was unanimously passed by the Senate on August 1 and signed into law by the President on August 9.

This legislation builds on the TSA's Wounded Warrior/Military Severely Injured Joint Services Operation Center Program (MSIJSOC). MSIJSOC allows severely injured or disabled service members, veterans, and family members can contact the program's Operation Center at TSA before a flight to arrange for a specialized and dignified screening process. The number of wounded warriors using the MSIJSOC program is steadily increasing, with approximately 4,252 in 2011 and 5,914 in 2012. The Helping Heroes Fly Act requires the TSA to maintain the Operations Center. It would also make improvements to the program by requiring the TSA to take into account privacy preferences, provide training to all screeners, and improve communications with advocacy organizations. Finally, it would mandate that TSA report to Congress on its progress.

Also on July 25, Senators Ayotte, Claire McCaskill, and John Tester joined a group of retired female service members to discuss critical bipartisan reforms approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee to combat military sexual assaults. Members of the press conference included Colonel Ana Smythe, USMC (Ret.), Colonel Lisa Schenck, USA (Ret.), and Chief Master Sergeant Barbara Taylor, USAF (Ret.).

July 30

On July 30, SASC voted to reconfirm JCS chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey and VJCS Adm. James Winnefeld, allowing them to remain in their posts for another two years. On August 1, the full Senate approved their nominations by a voice vote.

Approved

Also on July 30, Sen. Ayotte sent a letter to Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on DoD assistance for Gold Star wives. It reads in part:

"My staff and I have met with Jane [Horton] and other Gold Star wives to discuss their experiences and potential solutions. I was shocked at the quantity and nature of the service missteps these Gold Star spouses have had to endure...I respectfully request an update on specific reforms that are being made to address Mrs. Horton's concerns and an estimate for when these reforms will be complete."

SASC also held a hearing on the nominations of Vice Admiral Cecil Haney as commander of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) and Lieutenant General Curtis Scaparrotti as Commander of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). Sen. Ayotte asked questions on America's strategic nuclear weapons arsenal and East Coast missile defense.

July 31

Also on July 31, Sen. Ayotte signed a letter with three other Senators and four Representatives to FBI Director James Comey. The letter congratulates Director Comey on his appointment and reminds the new director of his responsibility to seek out and hold accountable those responsible for the terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, and requests a status report on the investigation within 30 days of his swearing in.

August 1

Senator Ayotte introduced a bipartisan resolution that would award a Congressional Gold Medal to Israeli President Shimon Peres, the highest civilian award in the United States, to honor the 65th anniversary of the founding of Israel and President Peres's 90th birthday. "President Peres' extraordinary record of service has helped strengthen the unbreakable bond between the U.S. and Israel, our closest and most stalwart ally in the Middle East," said Senator Ayotte.

Also on August 1, Senator Ayotte led a HSGAC Financial and Contracting Oversight Subcommittee hearing focused on recent reports of mismanagement and internal divisions between the Pentagon's JPAC and the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO).

"Here's what worries me, you've been looking and looking for 20 years," said Senator Ayotte to W. Montague Winfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Persons Affairs. "We need to go beyond looking - we need results."

Senators Ayotte and McCaskill also appeared on the PBS NewsHour with Gwen Ifill where they advocated for keeping military sexual assault cases in the chain of command:

"What we want to do is make sure that we make sure that victims are protected. That's why we made retaliation a crime under the UCMJ, but also to make sure that the chain of command and the commanders take responsibility and aren't let off the hook for creating the best supportive environment for victims...And, in fact, what we have found is that if you compared the amount of prosecutions brought by commanders, they have actually brought more prosecutions than if you just left it with the JAG lawyers. So I'm worried for victims that less cases will be prosecuted if we take it out of the chain of command. So, to me, as a former prosecutor, if we prosecute less cases, then it's going to put victims in a very difficult position."

August 2

Last Congress, Senator Ayotte successfully introduced, passed, and had signed into law legislation to require the American Battle Monuments Commission to restore and maintain Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines, the final resting place of 8,300 U.S. service members and their dependents. She was recently notified that restoration efforts have not begun months after her legislation was enacted. On August 2, she wrote a letter to Secretary Kerry seeking answers from the State Department regarding the lack of progress in beginning this work:

"Almost seven months after S. 3202 became law, I understand that the U.S. Department of State and the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs have not finalized an agreement that would allow the ABMC to begin its important work. Clark Veterans Cemetery is the final resting place for more than 8,300 U.S. service members and their dependents... I respectfully request that the State Department complete the agreement with the Philippines regarding Clark Veterans Cemetery at the earliest opportunity so the ABMC can begin their essential work without delay."

August 15

Senator Ayotte welcomed the announcement that the Pentagon will immediately implement a special victims' advocacy program to assist military sexual assault victims through the legal process. The initiative is similar to bipartisan legislation that Senator Ayotte authored with Senator Patty Murray to provide victims of sexual assault in all service branches with a Special Victims' Counsel. The Pentagon also announced it would establish standards regarding inappropriate behavior between instructors and trainees, which is similar to a provision in the Murray-Ayotte legislation. Both Murray-Ayotte provisions were included in the bipartisan Combating Military Sexual Assault Act (S. 871).

August 26

Sen. Ayotte authored an op-ed in the Union Leader in support of suspending aid to Egypt:

"In the wake of a coup, U.S. law requires the suspension of most aid to a country 'whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup d'état or decree'... have been a strong supporter of aid to Egypt, which has been a longtime strategic ally in the Middle East and remains an important country in the Arab and Muslim world. However, America's credibility is at stake... The Egyptian military ignored our requests and has instead pursued a brutal crackdown that has resulted in more than 1,000 deaths... We should not be fooled by reports of the demise of the Muslim Brotherhood. The military's brutal actions are not killing the Brotherhood. But government violence threatens to transform the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt from a political party with deeply troubling views (but that had turned its back on violence and upheld the Camp David Accords) into another violent terrorist organization on Israel's doorstep. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has millions of supporters who will either participate in the political process peacefully or go to war against it, which would have generational consequences for Israel, the United States and the people of Egypt."

Josh Denton (Congresswoman Shea-Porter):

The following Syria statement was well received:

- "While Syrian President Assad has committed vicious crimes against his own people, and I especially condemn the use of chemical weapons, it is hard to see at this time how a military strike against Syria will fix this."
- "If the United States launches a sustained and heavy attack, we run the risk of swapping Assad out for some equally ruthless group. If we launch a smaller, targeted attack, we run the risk of emboldening President Assad and causing more casualties."
- "I understand why there is such a range of opinion about what will or won't work in Syria, but there is still no clear path to ending the violence in Syria's civil war."
- "The President is right to come to Congress and seek a vote over military action in Syria. He owes it to the American people, and Members of Congress owe it to their constituents, to debate this issue. Congress should return to Washington immediately to consider this matter."

.Veterans Town Hall, Sweeny Post, August 21, the panel included:

- Tammy Krueger, Acting Director of the Manchester VA Medical Center
- Lisa Stone, Supervisory Veterans Service Representative
- Seth Goodall, New England Regional Administrator of the US Small Business Administration
- Walter Wise, Northeast Veterans Business Resource Center (NEVBRC)
- David Quinn, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)
- Denise Roy-Innarelli, Assistant Director, ESB/Operations, NH Employment Security

.The Congresswoman spoke at the Tilton Veterans' Home Korean War Ceremony

Marked the 60th anniversary of the armistice that ended the bloodshed at the New Hampshire Veterans Home where 62 of its residents, including 8 women, who served during the war, were commemorated.

.Congresswoman toured the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Pease National Guard Base, and took part in a defense industry roundtable with Admiral Mike Mullen.

.Congresswoman toured the USCG Portsmouth Harbor Station

Rear Admiral Dan Abel, Commander, First Coast Guard District, which is responsible for Coast Guard activities in New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine.

.Congresswoman attended the Ribbon Cutting of the Vectronix facility in Bedford

Vectronix is a leader in the development of light-weight laser range finder binoculars that also provide night vision and thermal imaging.

Vectronix supports the activities of the United States military, homeland security, and law enforcement communities.

The Bedford facility is expected to bring about 130 jobs to Bedford and give the town an economic boost

.Congresswoman met with Air Force Col. (ret) Gail Prince. The FY14 NDAA makes substantive forward progress in combating military sexual assault

Strips commanders of their ability to dismiss court martial convictions for serious offenses

Prohibits commanders from reducing guilty findings for serious offenses

Requires service members found guilty of rape or sexual assault to be punitively discharged from the military

Clearly lays out the rights of victims and sets guidelines for defense counsel interviews of the victim

Allows victims of sexual assault to apply for a permanent change of station or unit transfer so they no longer have to serve next to their offenders

Reaffirms commanders' ability to remove or temporarily reassign service members who are the alleged perpetrators of sexual assault

Requires qualified and specially-trained lawyers to be provided to victims of sex-related offenses

Includes reforms to improve the performance evaluation process, increase commander accountability, and address military culture

Requires an independent panel to assess the current role and authority of commanders

Requires better tracking of sexual assault and harassment data and gives improve protections for whistleblowers

.The Congresswoman's Office held 3 veterans Open Office Hours earlier in the summer at the American Legions in: Conway, Laconia, Seabrook

Approved

Michael Ollen (Congresswoman McLane-Kuster):

LEGISLATION SPONSORED/COSPONSORED

On August 2, 2013, Rep. Kuster cosponsored **H.R. 1284, the Veterans Medical Access Act**. Introduced by Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA), this bill would improve travel benefits for blind and severely disabled. It would extend travel reimbursements for inpatient care to catastrophically disabled non-service connected veterans with low vision or legal blindness, with a spinal cord injury or disorder, or with double or multiple amputations whose travel is in connection with receipt of VA hospital rehabilitative care at specialized Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) or Blind Rehabilitation Centers (BRC), or a prosthetics rehabilitation center.

MEETINGS/EVENTS

During the August recess, Congresswoman Kuster held several meetings with service members and veterans aimed at increasing access to VA care and addressing current issues such as military sexual trauma.

On August 13, Rep. Kuster met with members of the National Guard, veterans, survivors of military sexual assault, and community partners during a roundtable discussion on military sexual trauma.

On August 20, Rep. Kuster met with homeless veterans at The Bridge House in Plymouth. She also toured the facility and discussed the planned Soldier On project which would provide 50 permanent units for homeless veterans. Leading the discussions were Alex Ray and Cathy Bentwood.

On August 20, Rep. Kuster met with the North Country Veteran Council at the Berlin Vet Center to discuss the innovative community partnerships that define veterans care in the North Country. Fifteen members of the council attended along with representatives from White River Junction and New Hampshire DHHS.

On August 21, Rep. Kuster hosted a roundtable discussion with veterans in Colebrook. Rep. Kuster was joined by Director of the White River Junction VA Medical Center, Deborah Amdur, Acting Chief of Staff and Head of Ambulatory Services, Dr. Hugh Huizenga and veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. The discussion centered around the proposed part time access clinic the VA is hoping to add to Colebrook and the general needs of the North Country Veterans Community.

4. Misc. / Announcements / Calendar Items:

- 4 SEP 13- Job Fair St George, Manchester 1000-1300
- 5 SEP 13- Job Fair Nashua Community College 1000-1300
- 5 SEP 13- Boston Veteran job fair at Gillette stadium 1100-1500
- 6 SEP 13- Job Fair Exeter (old HS) 1000-1300
- 10 SEP NHES Job Fair 1100-1400
- 11 SEP, 6:00pm: 100 Nights of Remembrance Closing Ceremony @ NH State Veterans Cemetery
- 15 SEP-Run for the Fallen NH at Odiome State Park, Rye
- 17 SEP- Hiring for our Heroes Veterans Event, Portsmouth
- 18 SEP 1000 to 1500 - Harbor Homes Stand Down for homeless veterans at 45 High Street in Nashua.
- 28 SEP, 11:00am: Annual National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony @ the NH State Veterans Cemetery, hosted by VFW
- 19 OCT, 4th Annual Seacoast Veterans Conference "Seeking Your Normal In The Face Of War", 3003 Lafayette Road, Portsmouth, NH
- 23 OCT – Veterans Count Breakfast 0730 Radisson, Manchester – FREE - call 800-778-4251. Speaker will be Col Danny McKnight, USA(ret) – Wrote Streets of Mogadishu – (basis for Black Hawk Down)
- 3 NOV, 10:30-noon: Fall Clean-up @ the NH State Veterans Cemetery by Rolling Thunder and others
- 11 NOV, 11:00am: Veterans Day ceremony @ the NH State Veterans Cemetery, hosted by DAV

5. Motion to adjourn 1st J Shea, 2nd B Saxon and the meeting ended at 1850.

Next meeting date: 1 OCT 2013 (Regularly the 1st Tue at 1700) Location: NH Veterans Home, Tilton, NH

Respectfully submitted,

Steph Riley
Secretary